A DAY OF SILENTS | DECEMBER 3, 2016 | CASTRO THEATRE

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DECEMBER 3, 2016

10:00 AM CHAPLIN AT ESSANAY
Live Musical Accompaniment by Donald Sosin
Introduction by David Shepard

12:15 PM SO THIS IS PARIS
Live Musical Accompaniment by Donald Sosin

2:15 PM STRIKE
Live Musical Accompaniment by Alloy Orchestra

4:45 PM DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERS
Live Musical Accompaniment by Donald Sosin
Introduction by Des Buford

7:00 PM THE LAST COMMAND
Live Musical Accompaniment by Alloy Orchestra

9:15 PM SADIE THOMPSON
Live Musical Accompaniment by Donald Sosin
Introduction by Bevan Dufty

TABLE OF CONTENTS

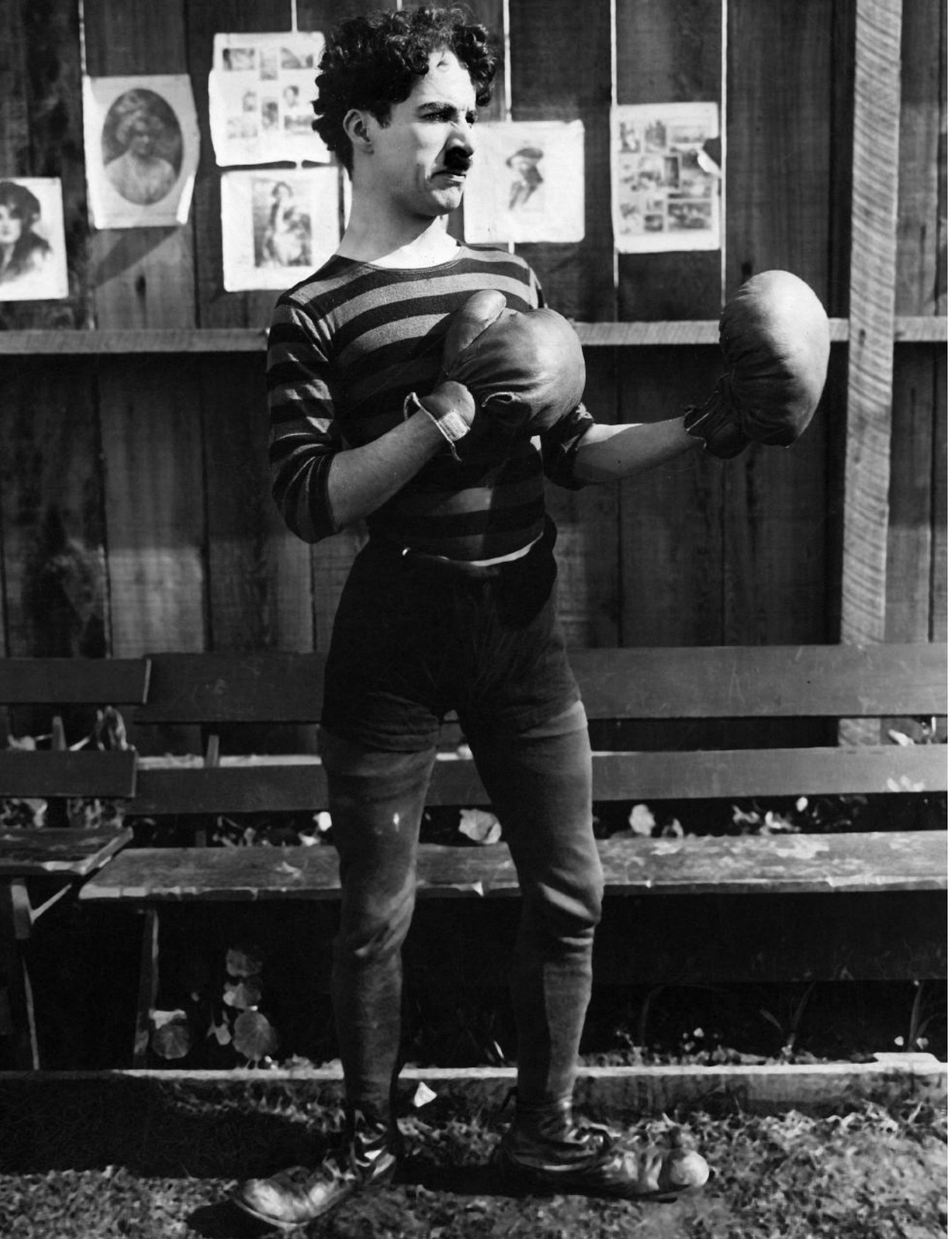
MUSICIANS

ALLOY ORCHESTRA

Working with an outrageous assemblage of peculiar objects, Alloy Orchestra thrashes and grinds soulful music from unlikely sources. Founded twenty-five years ago, the three-man musical ensemble performs live accompaniment its members have written expressly for classic silent films. Alloy has helped revive some of the great masterpieces of the silent era by touring extensively, commissioning new prints, and collaborating with archives, collectors, and curators. At today's event, the orchestra performs its original scores for *Strike* and *The Last Command*.

DONALD SOSIN

Pianist Donald Sosin has been creating and performing scores for silent films, both live and for DVD releases, for more than forty years. He is the current resident accompanist at New York's Film Society of Lincoln Center, the Museum of the Moving Image, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music and has received commissions to create works for the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Chorus, Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, and Turner Classic Movies, among others. Since 2007 he has performed at the San Francisco Silent Film Festival, where today he accompanies the Chaplin at Essanay program, *So This Is Paris*, *Different from the Others*, and *Sadie Thompson*.



CHAPLIN AT ESSANAY

LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY DONALD SOSIN

If the early slapstick comedy of the Keystone Film Company represents Charles Chaplin's cinematic infancy, the films he made for the Essanay Film Manufacturing Company are his adolescence. The Essanays find Chaplin in transition, taking greater time and care with each film, experimenting with new ideas, and adding texture to the Little Tramp character that became his legacy.

After the expiration of his one-year contract with Keystone, Chaplin was lured to Essanay for the unprecedented salary of $1,250 a week, with a bonus of $10,000 for signing with the company. The fourteen films he made for Essanay were designated on release as the "Essanay-Chaplin Brand." The company's headquarters were in Chicago, with a second studio in Niles, California. Essanay began in 1907 and a year later became a member of the Motion Picture Patents Company, a consortium of producers popularly known as "The Trust." (The Trust had an American distribution chain called the General Film Company and was powerful enough to control a majority of American film distribution and quash the efforts of all but the most sharp-witted independent companies.) Chaplin's only year with Essanay, 1915, was the company's zenith. The studio foundered after Chaplin left to join the Mutual Film Corporation in 1916 and finally ceased operations in 1918. It would likely have been forgotten were it not for Chaplin's association with it.

"I don't use other people's scripts, I write my own."

While no one Chaplin film for Essanay displays the more complex, subtle filmmaking that characterizes his later work, these comedies contain a collection of wonderful, revelatory moments, foreshadowing the pathos, comedic transposition, fantasy, gag humor, and irony of the mature Chaplin films to come.

Regarded as the first classic Chaplin film, *The Tramp* is noteworthy for its use of pathos, situations that evoke pity or compassion, particularly toward Chaplin's character. *The Tramp* dares to end with the Little Tramp walking down an open road, alone and unloved, adding poignancy to comedic filmmaking. Chaplin employs pathos again for *The Bank*, when the object of Charlie's affection throws away the flowers he has given her and tears up the accompanying love note, breaking the Tramp's heart.

Chaplin's Essanay comedies are marked by a number of other innovations. The first is comic transposition. In *A Night Out*, his second film for Essanay, the Tramp, thoroughly inebriated, gently puts his cane to bed, "pours" himself a glass of water out of a candlestick telephone, and uses toothpaste to polish his boots. Chaplin also employs fantasy for the first time in the Essanay films. In *A Night Out*, as the cross-eyed comic Ben Turpin pulls the Tramp along the sidewalk, he believes that he is floating among flowers on a river. Chaplin's own style of gag comedy also develops in the Essanays. In *The Champion*, a David-like Tramp receives the assistance of his loyal bulldog to best a Goliath-like boxing opponent. Irony, a hallmark of Chaplin's mature work, appears for the first time in the Essanays. In *Police*, an evangelist who implores the Tramp, just released from jail, "to go straight" is later revealed to be a pickpocket himself. Finally, Chaplin first uses several other devices that became signature features of his later films: dance (*Shanghaied*), the equivocal ending (*The Bank*), and the classic fade-out (*The Tramp*).

Nowhere is Chaplin's growing cinematic maturity more evident in the Essanay comedies than in the subtle evolution of the Tramp's treatment of women.

The Champion, 1915. Photo courtesy of the Jeffrey Vance Collection

Shortly after arriving on the West Coast, Chaplin discovered Edna Purviance, who first appeared in Chaplin's *A Night Out* and remained his leading lady until 1923. Born in Nevada in 1895, Purviance was a beautiful, blonde-haired young woman Chaplin spotted at Tate's Café in San Francisco. Although she had no motion picture or stage experience, Chaplin was captivated by her looks and charm. The personal chemistry between them and the intimate relationship the two enjoyed offscreen served the Tramp's changing attitudes toward women well. In the Keystone comedies, the Tramp was usually at odds with his frequent foil Mabel Normand. Purviance was demure and more refined than the slapstick Normand, and the Tramp's interplay with her is gentle and often romantic. The female characters of the first Essanays are indistinguishable from those of the Keystones, as objects of desire, derision, or simply unimportant to the plot. However, beginning with *The Champion*, there is a softening in the Tramp's attitude toward women, as demonstrated in the romantic longing at the beginning of *A Jitney Elopement*. For the next eight years, Purviance proved to be a capable, dedicated, and loyal partner who appeared in thirty-four Chaplin comedies. In 1923, while at United Artists, Chaplin attempted to launch Purviance as a star in her own right with *A Woman of Paris* and reportedly kept her on his payroll for the rest of his life.

The evolution of the Tramp was undoubtedly driven by Chaplin's efforts to have greater creative control over his films. Unlike the Keystone comedies, which have simple plots and place a primacy on farce, Chaplin's Essanay comedies display more sophisticated plots and involve more textured characters. The maddening demand of producing nearly one new Keystone comedy each week was reflected in the films' rapid pace and formulaic storylines. However, the pace at Essanay was somewhat slower, allowing Chaplin more time and care in creating his films as well as more room to experiment. The tempered pace shows in the style of the films, which contain more subtle pantomime and character development. Although the first seven films Chaplin made for Essanay were released over three months, Chaplin eased production to one two-reel film a month after that.

Chaplin was very much aware of the criticism of his earlier work as vulgar. "Never anything dirtier was place upon the screen than Chaplin's 'Tramp,'" groused Sime Silverman in his review of *Work* for the industry trade paper *Variety*. "But since the audience will laugh there is no real cause for complaint." At Essanay, Chaplin began to refine the comedy. It was familiar territory for Chaplin, who learned his art in the British music halls where character and story development were crucial for getting the big laugh. (He also admired the great French silent-film comedian Max Linder who pioneered this method of acting in film.) The Tramp's drunken mannerisms in *A Night Out* and *A Night in the Show* borrow heavily from Chaplin's famed music-hall act, and his female impersonation in *A Woman* reflects the style of masquerade comedy found in many music-hall sketches.

The Essanay films turned Chaplin into an icon.

Chaplin's early efforts to pull Essanay in the direction of character-based comedy caused tension with the studio where a factory culture prevailed. Standardization was a goal of the Trust, in which Essanay had been participating for seven years by the time Chaplin joined. Essanay's position in the film industry had been earned by the Broncho Billy westerns and the Alkali Ike, Snakeville, and George Ade Fables comedies. No doubt Essanay's expectation was that Chaplin would provide another successful, if predictable, product. When he was instructed to pick up his script from the studio's head scenario writer (and future gossip columnist) Louella Parsons, an alarmed Chaplin snapped, "I don't use other people's scripts, I write my own."

Chaplin had other disagreements with Essanay from the beginning. The company's cofounder, George K. Spoor, had never heard of Chaplin and was reluctant at first to hand over the promised $10,0000 signing bonus. Chaplin insisted that viewing prints be developed for screening rough footage, refusing to abide by Essanay's practice of projecting the original camera negative to save the studio the expense of making a positive copy. After Chaplin left Essanay, he despised the company's unscrupulous tactic of re-editing his films using discard material in various forms. *Triple Trouble*, released in 1918, three years after Chaplin left the company, was assembled without Chaplin's approval from portions of *Police*, the ending of *Work*, and an autobiographical feature-length production Chaplin had abandoned entitled *Life*, along with some new footage directed by Leo White. Perhaps because of this acrimony (and the resulting lawsuits) Chaplin remained bitter about this period in his career for the rest of his life. The tension with Essanay did not, however, distract Chaplin from his art.

In early 1915, as he embarked on his first Essanay comedy, Chaplin described his working method to *Motion Picture* magazine as largely improvisational. "I lay out my plot and study my character thoroughly … I go before the camera without the slightest notion of what I'm going to do. I try and lose myself." Yet he paid meticulous attention to detail, even at this early stage of his career. Stan Laurel, who had accompanied Chaplin on the Fred Karno tours of America in 1910 and 1912 as actor and Chaplin's understudy, recalled his friend Leo White's experience performing in *The Tramp*. "He said they repeated some gags until the actors felt that if they did it one more time they'd blow their corks." But that's what made Chaplin so great, Laurel went on to explain: "He knew that sometimes you have to do a thing fifty times in slightly different ways until you get the very best. The difference between Chaplin and all the rest of us who made comedy—with one exception, Buster Keaton—was that he just absolutely refused to do anything but the best. To get the best he worked harder than anyone I know."

His New Job, 1915. Photo courtesy of the Jeffrey Vance Collection

Chaplin was considered a somewhat solitary figure during his Essanay period and his appearance was not very different than his shabby alter ego. Chaplin's future cinematographer Rollie Totheroh trained at Essanay, where he first met Chaplin. Many years later Totheroh described Chaplin's arrival at the Niles studio and unpacking of the new comedian's belongings: "We opened up his bag to take some things out. All that he had in it was a pair of socks with the heels worn out and a couple dirty undershirts, an old messed shirt and an old worn out toothbrush—that's all … But he talked like he was used to luxury, commanding this and commanding that. It wasn't like him; later I could see he was very shy."

In examining Chaplin's surviving personal papers and photographs of the Keystone and Essanay periods, it is somewhat jarring to see how unsure Chaplin's writing and spelling were during this time in his life. The inscriptions are a stark contrast to the urbane and sophisticated personal image he cultivated after many years of self-education and improvement. The photographs in particular, with their misspelled notations, are a testament to the phenomenal effort and ambition it took to rise above his impoverished Cockney beginnings.

Unfortunately Chaplin later adopted a dismissive attitude toward his Essanay comedies, when in fact they reveal a fascinating and subtle evolution of his art. They demand a prominent place in the history of film for another, simpler reason—they turned Chaplin into an icon. Donning his instantly recognizable getup, Chaplin became the most famous man in the world. Charles J. McGuirk stated in the July 1915 issue of *Motion Picture*: "A little Englishman, quiet, unassuming, but surcharged with dynamite, is influencing the world right now … To be Chaplinesque is to be funny … Any form of expressing Chaplin is what the public wants … The world has Chaplinitis."

Essanay exploited Chaplin's success to the hilt, marketing toys, postcards, cartoons, comic strips, and statuettes bearing his likeness. Among the many songs recorded were "The Charlie Chaplin Glide," "The Charlie Chaplin Walk," and, most famously, a parody of the 1907 song "Red Wing" titled, "The Moon Shines Bright on Charlie Chaplin," popular with soldiers during the First World War:

> *When the moon shines bright on Charlie Chaplin,*
> *His boots are cracking*
> *For want of blacking,*
> *And his little baggy trousers*
> *They want mending*
> *Before we send him*
> *To the Dardanelles.*

Chaplin later told journalist and broadcaster Alistair Cook that his initial reaction to the song was one of fear. "I was certain they were out to get me." Chaplin, a British subject, should have enlisted in August 1914 when the Great War erupted in Europe. For a time, "Chaplin the slacker" was a topic in the British press. However, both British and American audiences continued to love his films. A British trade paper reported in May 1915 that "so strong is the grip of the Chaplin comedies that last week numerous halls in the Liverpool district adopted the expediency of giving special performances at which the films exhibited consisted exclusively of the Chaplin productions."

The Little Tramp had his imitators during this period, from Billy Ritchie to Harold Lloyd's early Lonesome Luke character. "By the autumn of 1915," wrote Terry Ramsaye in his 1926 book *A Million and One Nights: A History of the Motion Picture*, "Charles Chaplin had become the biggest single fact of the motion pictures."

Chaplin's Essanay comedies hold another distinction. For the first time in his career, "comic artistry" and "genius" were used in praise of his work, words applied to Chaplin for the rest of his life. There are moments in these early films that merit such accolades but these Essanay films mainly serve as a crucial step toward his more mature films.

THE FILMS

HIS NEW JOB

(Released February 1, 1915)
Chaplin's first Essanay comedy was the only film he made in Chicago. As with his Keystone films, *A Film Johnnie* (1914) and *The Masquerader* (1914), Chaplin chose to set the action in a film studio. Charlie is hired as a prop man and is soon demoted to a carpenter's assistant at Lockstone studio (a play on his former employer, Keystone) before given the chance to act, which ends in disaster. The film was Chaplin's first pairing with cross-eyed comedian Ben Turpin and features an early appearance by Gloria Swanson as a secretary. It is also notable for several tracking shots (the work of cinematographer Jackson Rose) seldom used in film comedy of the period. After completing work on the film in January, Chaplin escaped the harsh winter and primitive working conditions of Chicago for California, taking comedians Ben Turpin and Leo White with him.

THE CHAMPION

(Released March 11, 1915)
Inspired by Chaplin's interest in boxing, as well as his 1914 Keystone two-reeler with Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle, *The Knockout*, this comedy has Charlie finding employment as a sparring partner who ends up in a prizefight, along with his pet bulldog. In 1915, boxing events were illegal in most states and films of boxing matches (including comic takes on them) satisfied a pent-up interest in the subject. Chaplin had already featured a relationship between the Tramp and a dog in the Keystone two-reeler from the previous year, *Caught in a Cabaret*, and further developed it in 1918's *A Dog's Life*. Chaplin's brilliant choreography and hilarious antics in the ring anticipate the famous boxing match in *City Lights* (1931). "Broncho Billy" Anderson and Jesse T. Robbins (Chaplin's producer for the Essanay comedies) play spectators in the boxing sequence.

A NIGHT IN THE SHOW

(Released November 15, 1915)
This exceptional comedy owes its existence to the Fred Karno sketch, *Mumming Birds*, a burlesque of a music-hall performance with terrible acts and ill-behaved patrons, in which Chaplin had found his great theatrical success playing the Inebriated Swell. Chaplin plays dual roles in the film: a version of another stage success, the well-to-do-drunk Mr. Pest, and Mr. Rowdy, a dissipated working man, both of whom attend a vaudeville performance. Mr. Pest manages to cause as much disorder in the stalls as Mr. Rowdy does in the gallery. Although it differs significantly from *Mumming Birds* to avoid claims of plagiarism, the film carefully reflects the Karno style. The litigious Karno had some success prosecuting unauthorized stage performances. However, he lost his 1908 suit against film company Pathé Frères and its film *At the Show* in English court. Chaplin returned to the idea of dual roles in *The Idle Class* (1921) and *The Great Dictator* (1940).

Essay and film descriptions adapted from a chapter in Jeffrey Vance's 2003 book, *Chaplin: Genius of the Cinema*.

A Night in the Show, 1915. Photo courtesy of the Jeffrey Vance Collection

Lilyan Tashman as Georgette Lallé

SO THIS IS PARIS

LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY DONALD SOSIN

Directed by Ernst Lubitsch, USA, 1926
Cast Monte Blue, Patsy Ruth Miller, Lilyan Tashman, André Beranger, Sidney D'Albrook, and Myrna Loy
Production Warner Bros. Pictures **Print Source** Library of Congress

By the early 1920s, German director Ernst Lubitsch had established a reputation as a master of two genres—grand historical epics and sparkling comedies. American audiences happily paid to see his films as well, and superstar Mary Pickford, eager to leave behind little girl roles for sophisticated adult ones, invited Lubitsch to direct her in Hollywood. With the postwar German economy in disarray and the American-funded studio where Lubitsch had his production company shut down, he accepted Pickford's offer and left Germany in late 1922. The director and star were not a good match, but their 1923 film *Rosita* did well enough at the box office that the newly-incorporated Warner Bros. studio, seeing its chance to enter the big leagues with the help of a prestigious European director, offered the recent émigré a contract. He signed a six-film, three-year deal that gave him unprecedented control, including provisions for his own production unit. In 1926, after four Warner pictures (plus one loan-out to Paramount) and escalating tensions with head of production Jack Warner, Lubitsch made what turned out to be his final film for the studio, *So This Is Paris*.

Proof positive the famed "Lubitsch Touch" was not dependent on language

Based on an 1872 French play *Le Réveillon*—also the basis for Johann Strauss's operetta *Die Fledermaus*—the film is a sophisticated comedy about two married couples whose wandering eyes land on each others' spouses. This romantic roundelay is familiar territory for fans of Lubitsch's sound comedies, in which sex is the primary undercurrent and motivation for many of the characters. *So This Is Paris*'s visual inventiveness is proof positive that the famed "Lubitsch Touch" (a press agent phrasing that came to define the director's distinctive combination of style and wit) was not dependent on language. The film also presages his 1930s musicals, and the climactic Artists Ball, featuring a Charleston contest, is kinetic, kaleidoscopic, the visual equivalent of music—it throbs and vibrates with music. As Lubitsch biographer Scott Eyman writes, the scene "amounts to one of the silent cinema's most audacious leaps toward the musical." Also very Lubitschean is some sly Freudian business with a cane. Lubitsch had left Germany before the full flowering of Weimar excess, but the sexual innuendo for which he became famous is more playful than decadent, and flamboyant jazz-era Hollywood was a perfect fit for his witty visual commentary. As Lubitsch himself noted in 1929 about his so-called "touch" to film journalist Herman G. Weinberg, "The camera *should* comment, insinuate, make an epigram … We're telling stories with pictures so we must try to make the pictures as expressive as we can."

So This Is Paris's stars, while less familiar to contemporary audiences, were either major stars or promising newcomers in the 1920s. Monte Blue had worked with Griffith and DeMille in the 1910s and by the early '20s had become a well-known leading man, romancing stars onscreen such as Swanson, Bow, and, in Lubitsch's 1924 *The Marriage Circle*, Florence Vidor and Marie Prevost. During the

sound era, he segued into supporting roles. Patsy Ruth Miller, who was discovered by Alla Nazimova, retired from the screen early in the sound era. Lilyan Tashman was described by a fan magazine writer as "the most gleaming, glittering, moderne, hard-surfaced and distingué woman in all of Hollywood." André Beranger, the Australian-born George Beringer who changed his name and claimed to be French, appeared in more than 140 films between 1913 and 1950. One actress with a bit part in *So This Is Paris* had a bigger career in sound films than all four of the film's stars: Myrna Loy as the saucy maid. Sadly, Loy never worked with Lubitsch again. Neither did Patsy Ruth Miller who had fond memories of Lubitsch. "I adored that man," she told film historian Kevin Brownlow. "Here was a director who directed. 'I have worked for months,' he told us, 'and every scene the writer and I have visualized. We've done it to the best of our ability. And if there is anything an actor feels he cannot do—we will not change the scene, we will change the actor.'"

The New York papers raved about *So This Is Paris* when it premiered. The *Herald Tribune*'s Richard Watts didn't spare the superlatives: "The most uproarious of his farces, the most hilarious of his works, the funniest comedy imaginable … adult and magnificent satirical farce." John S. Cohen of the *Sun* compared Lubitsch to the great literary satirists. "We all know, of course, that Lubitsch is one of the two most skillful cinema directors in the world … Let us then remain cognizant of the fact that—as a mind—Lubitsch belongs in the varying classes that include Carroll, Wilde, Congreve."

Patsy Ruth Miller and André Beranger. Photo courtesy of Photofest

"This dazzling episode is like the dream of a man after drinking more than his share of wine at such an event."

New York Times critic Mordaunt Hall described the audience reaction to the Charleston sequence: "This dazzling episode is like the dream of a man after drinking more than his share of wine at such an event. The comedy in this film had, up to that time, kept the audience in constant explosions of laughter, but the startling dissolving scenic effects and varied 'shots' elicited a hearty round of applause."

None of the plaudits could salvage the director's relationship with Warner Bros., however. Even before beginning *So This Is Paris*, Lubitsch, who was used to working without executive supervision and annoyed by Jack Warner's meddling, had tried unsuccessfully to buy out his contract. Now, with *So This Is Paris* completed, he owed the studio one final film, but his battles with Jack Warner continued and they agreed to part ways. Now much in demand, Lubitsch had no problem negotiating new deals with both Paramount and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

In the two decades that followed, Lubitsch found his métier with sophisticated, dazzling films. His first talking picture, the 1929 operetta *The Love Parade*, starring Maurice Chevalier and Jeannette MacDonald, which film historian Theodore Huff declared "the first truly cinematic screen musical in America," was clever and inventive. It was quickly followed by two more early sound musicals, *Monte Carlo* and *The Smiling Lieutenant*. All of them pushed the boundaries of what a musical could be. Other standouts include the sleek romantic triangles *Trouble in Paradise* and *Design for Living* at Paramount in the early thirties, and the charming classics *Ninotchka* and *The Shop Around the Corner* at MGM during Hollywood's Golden Age. Because of Lubitsch's disciplined and economical working methods Paramount named him head of production at a time when the studio was struggling to recover from bankruptcy. Remarkably, Lubitsch never received an Academy Award, yet his films earned both critical approval and some popular success even as his health prematurely declined. He closed out his career at 20th Century Fox. In 1947, Lubitsch died of heart disease at age fifty-five. Billy Wilder, a Lubitsch protégé and fellow German import, later recalled an exchange with another Hollywood titan, director William Wyler. As they left the funeral, Wilder said wistfully, "No more Lubitsch," and Wyler replied, "Worse than that, no more Lubitsch films."

—Margarita Landazuri

GENEALOGY OF A DANCE CRAZE

At the height of the Jazz Age, Americans were shaking their tail feathers to the Turkey Trot, the Bunny Hug, Snake Hips, the Lindy Hop, the Black Bottom, and the mother of all dance crazes, the Charleston. A jubilant pinpoint in time shaped by the great northern migration of millions of African Americans, the proliferation of late-night hootchy-kootchy joints and jazz music on wax disc recordings, the rise of black musical theater and Tin Pan Alley composers, the growing economic and social freedom of women, the Charleston craze might just have been America's first genuine pop culture moment.

Marked by distinctive side-kicks and crossing of the knees, the dance also allowed for individual improvisation and blurred the lines between performance and social dancing. Its steps have been variously traced back to the Obolo Dance in West Africa, the King Sailor Dance of Trinidad, the *batuque* of Cabo Verde, rituals of the free African settlements on the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina, and to the Patting Juba, a competitive dance that incorporated a percussive slapping of hands on the body supposedly taken up by African captives after drumming was forbidden for fear of slave revolts. It traveled forward to youngsters on the streets of Charleston performing for coins, then onto the stages of Harlem, and, soon after, Broadway. As someone wrote at the time: "From coast to coast the Charleston has caught the country swaying to its curious rhythm. America is Charleston mad."

Not everyone was so elated, however, and it became the target of reformers and moralists across the country. The National Association of Dancing Masters promised to sound "the death knell of the Charleston" by teaching folkdances as a wholesome (read: "white") alternative and an article in a 1921 issue of *Ladies Home Journal* warned, "The American people will never be the same as they were before they learned the disgraceful art of the shimmy and toddle. It is likely that the birth rate will be affected." Their sour-faced efforts failed and the Charleston lived on, earning a hallowed place in American cinema when George and Mary Bailey fell in love, and into the pool, during a Charleston contest in Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*.

1896 The Jenkins Orphanage Band begins to travel widely to raise funds to benefit the African American boys home in Charleston. Incubator of many future ragtime musicians, the band spread Gullah, or geechie, rhythms and the expressive dancing style of its young conductors.

1903 Dance pioneer Thaddeus Drayton visits his hometown, Charleston, South Carolina, where he first saw the Charleston danced on the city's streets. "They dolled it up later," he told historians.

1911 The Whitman Sisters incorporate the dance into their legendary vaudeville show, the highest paid and longest running in their day. They insist that black spectators be admitted to all areas of the theater.

1913 James P. Johnson, composer of the original Charleston tune, sees Gullah dances while playing at The Jungles Casino in New York City. The Charleston is already a regulation cotillion step.

1919 The Eighteenth Amendment makes Prohibition the law of the land. By now, singer and dancer Billy Maxey is teaching Hollywood movie stars the Charleston's moves.

1920 The Nineteenth Amendment is ratified and women can finally vote. Henry "Rubberlegs" Williams wins his first dance contest, the Charleston, in Atlanta.

1922 Liza, an all-black musical, features Rufus Greenlee and Maude Russell in the "Charleston Dancy." The first commercial radio broadcast comes out of Pittsburgh's KDKA and the Moral League calls for an "anti-vulgar ordinance" against jazz.

1923 The all-black-cast show *Runnin' Wild* opens in October and includes a chorus line of boys known as The Dancing Redcaps performing to James P. Johnson and Cecil Mack's soon-to-be famous song. "When they dance an inexplicable something fills the theatre and makes the audience gasp for breath," reads one review. Producer George Miller tries to cut the number from the show but the performers resist. Ziegfeld Follies features the Charleston in the first act finale called "Shake Your Feet." Flo Ziegfeld cuts the number after the first night. Meanwhile in Kansas City, the future Joan Crawford impresses a booking agent who sees her dance the Charleston.

1925 When Bricktop (so-called for the flaming red hair inherited from her white father) dances the Charleston at Paris's Le Grand Duc club, Cole Porter is in the audience and declares that she has "talking legs and feet." In October, Josephine Baker dances le Charleston in *Le Révue Negre* at the Théâtre Champs-Élysées. Back on Broadway, George Raft, billed as the "Fastest Dancer in the World," appears in *The City Chap* doing the Charleston. *Variety*'s July 8th headline reads: "Charleston—Death Dance," about the collapse of Boston's Pickwick Club and reports that "building inspectors have been stationed in all the older dance halls to investigate if the new dance step is a menace." Bessie Love dances the Charleston onscreen in *The King on Main Street* and a fourteen-year-old Ginger Rogers wins a Texas-wide Charleston contest.

1926 The Marx Brothers' *The Cocoanuts* adds the Irving Berlin song "Everyone in the World Is Doing the Charleston" to its revamped show, and a June article in *Dance* magazine calls the Charleston a "veritable vitamin to the debilitated dance … it has given life, vigor, glowing cheeks, a buoyant step, shining eyes, and breathless vitality to the limping muse." On July 31, *So This Is Paris* is released and, in France, Jean Renoir makes the satirical *Sur un air de Charleston*, in which a white woman (Catherine Hessling) teaches a black man (Johnny Hudgins) the titular dance.

—The Editors

STRIKE

LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY ALLOY ORCHESTRA

Directed by Sergei Eisenstein, USSR, 1925
Cast Grigori Aleksandrov, Maxim Strauch, Mikhail Gomorov, and others members of the First Workers' Theater of Proletkult **Production** Goskino **Print Source** George Eastman Museum

Once considered one of the greatest filmmakers who ever lived, and whose *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) was once judged by critics and directors to be the greatest film ever made, Sergei Eisenstein has seen his canonization come and go. Now merely a film school requirement, the name never attains front rank anymore—on one hand, we may not feel, after the disappearance of Soviet Communism, that there's a pressing need to take its propagandistic culture seriously and, on the other, tastes in film aesthetics have indisputably moved toward camera-movement poetics à la Murnau and away from the montage pyrotechnics Eisenstein pioneered. Certainly, the last half-century of silent-era discovery and reevaluation—as forgotten films by Asquith, Borzage, L'Herbier, Gance, Leni, et al., are restored and reintroduced—has dimmed the spotlight on Eisenstein's hectically edited, fiercely Bolshevik smart bombs.

hectically edited, fiercely Bolshevik smart bombs

Like advertising, propaganda is made both useless and quaint by its inherent ephemerality; considering it as art years hence means tumbling into the rabbit-hole of kitsch. (Which we do; note the modern popularity of Futurist design and the poster art of Alexander Rodchenko, who, if he were alive, could design my phone bill and I'd pay it twice.) One of the questions regarding Eisenstein today comes down to whether or not he was successful in subverting the state-mandated straitjacket with his extraordinary visual voodoo. Free of historical intents, contexts, or effects, however, Fascist art is usually heartbreaking in its naïveté, but Eisenstein's movies seem embittered and angry, as if revolutionary discontent unconsciously expressed the artist's outraged feeling that of all the nations in all the eras for the artist to be born into, it had to be this one.

Eisenstein was once regarded largely as cinema's most formidable intellectual, but his dialectic-based montage system was a theoretical Comet Kohoutek and his editing symbologies—equating Kerensky with a peacock in *October* (1927)—don't necessarily age well (not as salient sociopolitical commentary, anyway). His entire filmmaking philosophy, though responsible for much that is deathless in movie history, supposed a self-deifying cosmos: Eisenstein was the omniscient god, and the audience his easily manipulated minions. (Alfred Hitchcock and Steven Spielberg, it could be said, have had similar ideologies and formal approaches.) His most famous agitprop films click and whir like robots; it's no surprise that some of his most watchable films—*Que Viva Mexico!* (1932) and *Alexander Nevsky* (1938)—owe little to Hegelian idealism and everything to full-tilt-boogie expressionism. Everyone abandons dialectics sooner or later, and as the years and donnybrooks with the heads-of-state went by (Eisenstein was not only gay but rather more passionate about his artistic profile than his role as a propagandist), the filmmaker became entranced more by byzantine compositions than the ability to motivate the masses. Whereas *Potemkin* and *October* move like fast rivers of Leninist declamation, *Ivan the Terrible* (1945–46), coming after the baroque dreamtime of '30s von Sternberg and the

emergence of Welles, slows down to a shadowy, sculptured lurch.

Where does that leave *Strike* (*Stachka*), his first feature, for all intents and purposes the film that launched Soviet political filmmaking and the idea that montage was both a uniquely cinematic thrill tool and a formidable instrument for propaganda? If you try and forget everything you know about the Soviet story and its boot-on-the-throat history and instead look at the film as a filmmaker's zesty freshman attack on the medium itself, then it is revealed as Eisenstein's most personal film, the one he had the most fun making, the man's *400 Blows* or *Citizen Kane*. (He was twenty-six when he made it, as old as Welles in 1941.) For one thing, this razor-crisp blast from the past isn't quite as burdened with grim, commanding Communist purpose as Eisenstein's subsequent silents. It is, in fact, sprightly, jaunty, ceaselessly inventive and, surprisingly enough if you haven't seen it in a few decades, witty.

of all the nations in all the eras for Eisenstein to be born into, it had to be this one

As the title suggests, the story is a deliberately generic template for revolutionary action—Russian factory workers protest ill-treatment and poor wages and are then spurred on to a full-on strike after a framed compatriot hangs himself. Here, a strike is no dull narrative affair—the capitalists (all fat, cigar-smoking, cartoonish gluttons, of course) employ spies and Cossacks and even the fire department, and the espionage runs both ways, at a gallop. As with Eisenstein's other vintage agitprop classics, there is no single hero or villain, just crowds of collective will, in this case two colliding masses of human self-interest. But the electric pace and visual tumult keep things charged with an almost slapstick disposition. Eisenstein pulls out the stops: multiple exposures employed in an uncountable variety of ways, radical angles, cameras moving with/on top of factory equipment, expressionistically shaped iris ins and outs, even cut-out frames for creating a "fake" split-screen. And of course *Strike* is edited at a maniacal pace, full of rapid contrapuntal contrasts (dialectic editing may not have been very effective at converting semiconscious minds toward Marxist fervor, but it was terrific at mustering visual excitement), as well as introducing the jump cut (not the Godard jump cut but the Scorsese jump cut), while also taking the time to follow a few pigeons alighting onto the stilled factory equipment, as the battles rage elsewhere.

The plastic thrust of *Strike* is rascally and comedic—sure, Eisenstein's juxtapositions can be ponderous (a giant factory wheel slows to a halt as three workers, faded in, cross arms in defiance), but the sheer speed and esprit of the film let him get away with it, in the way that fast comedies can often get away with crude jokes if they keep moving quickly enough. Or is simplistic Communist imagery simply easier to swallow now, so many years after the fact? Indeed, when Eisenstein cuts from Cossacks suppressing a workers' meeting to four fat-cat stockholders "squeezing juice" for their cocktails, the effect can be groan-worthy if you let it. Or the outrageous hyperbole can seem almost zesty and satirical by now, since the film is not historical but almost fantastical in its stereotypical portrait of social strata. Look at its grotesque villains and backstabbing narrative gambits (a spy secretly photographing a protester with a camera shaped like a pocket-watch) as a retro comic-book saga of good and evil and suddenly the chill over Soviet tactics fades and you have pure grade-A pulp.

The politics, too, emerge as stirring and lovely if you let them, since the film so relentlessly frames the workers' conflict as one of muscular courage and since the workers were explicitly demanding the same rights—like an eight-hour work day—that workers all over the industrialized world had also been vying for in the pre-Revolutionary decades in which the tale is set. The famous dramatic peaks of the film, particularly the Cossack maliciously dropping an infant three stories to its death, remain powerful (enough so that home video releases have been known to include warnings on the case about "violence" that some "may find disturbing," a bracing tip of the hat, in the twenty-first century, to Eisenstein's breathless artistry behind the camera and at the editing table). But the movie is more consistently delighted with its own wicked energy than it is brimming with repulsion and fury. This may be, *in toto*, the launching pad for what became known as the action movie, the crystallization of cinema as a pulse-quickening visual assault.

—Michael Atkinson

Adapted with permission from an article published on the Turner Classic Movies website.

DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERS

LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY DONALD SOSIN

Directed by Richard Oswald, Germany, 1919
Cast Conrad Veidt, Fritz Schulz, and Reinhold Schünzel **Production** Richard Oswald-Film Berlin **Print Source** UCLA Film and Television Archive
Preceded by **FLASHES OF THE PAST: REVIEW OF HISTORIC EVENTS FROM 1910 TO 1925**
Production Pathé News **Print Source** UCLA Film and Television Archive

Divisions always appear sharper in an election year, and this has been one for the history books. Among other stress points, the politicized atmosphere underlined how gay rights have found increasing popular (as well as legal) progressive embrace on the one hand, and ever-more-vehement conservative blowback on the other. While that high-profile ideological battle has been raging at least since the 1970s heyday of Gay Lib and foe Anita Bryant, it seems very up-to-the-moment terrain. You'd hardly guess that similar debates over homosexuality stirred widespread controversy a century ago. But in a postwar Weimar Republic in Germany reacting against the disastrous legacy of the kaisers, such radical thinking was—at least briefly—not just permitted but in some quarters quite fashionable.

"Through science to justice"

Among champions of greater sexual freedom and tolerance few were more prominent than Magnus Hirschfeld, a Prussian-born physician whose interest in alternative medical treatments and viewpoints extended to publishing (albeit pseudonymously) a tract defending same-sex love in 1896. The next year, at thirty-one years of age, he cofounded the Scientific Humanitarian Committee. Its motto was "Through science to justice," its agenda advocacy for greater understanding of sexual minorities and, specifically, to overturn Paragraph 175, which criminalized male homosexual acts as well as other perceived sexual aberrations.

In 1919, Hirschfeld opened the Institute for Sexual Research, which offered public education and counseling. That same year saw the release of *Different from the Others* (*Anders als die Andern*), a commercial narrative feature he cowrote and appeared in and that made an impassioned, very direct plea for 175's repeal. It was the first movie to portray homosexual characters beyond the usual innuendo and ridicule.

Thought entirely lost for many decades, then recovered just in fragmentary form, *Different* remains a less-than-complete artifact. The Outfest UCLA Legacy Project's new restoration, incorporating materials from numerous sources, is the most comprehensive version available in at least eighty years. But even it is missing whole characters, subplots, and scenes, including a set piece (glimpsed only in a surviving still) in which the protagonist imagines Da Vinci, Tchaikovsky, Ludwig II, Oscar Wilde, and other historical figures who suffered for their sexual orientation. Intertitles fill in many gaps left by footage unlikely ever to be found—the Nazis made a point of destroying all the prints they could lay their hands on after they came into power in 1933.

But then, *Different from the Others* had a rocky reception from the start. Most critics, and even a number of conspicuous medical, police, and government authorities, praised its artistry and

At top: Conrad Veidt and Fritz Schulz; at bottom: Reinhold Schünzel and Conrad Veidt

good taste in dealing with what Hirschfeld termed "sexual intermediacy." In the screenplay, cowritten by Hirschfeld and director Richard Oswald, Paul Körner (portrayed by Conrad Veidt whose stardom went international with the following year's *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*) is a successful concert violinist. His private torments come to the fore when he takes on an adoring young protégé (Fritz Schulz). Their close but chaste relationship is noticed by Paul's old paramour (Reinhold Schünzel) who uses their shared "vice" as fodder for extortion.

Paul's concerned family sends him to a "Physician and Sexologist," played by Hirschfeld, who assures him in an intertitle that "Love for one's own sex can be just as pure and noble as that for the opposite sex. This orientation is to be found among many respectable people in all levels of society." But intellectual absolution alone can't save our protagonist. He and his hypocritical accuser wind up in court. The resulting scandal leads to a tragic end that Vito Russo's groundbreaking 1981 study *The Celluloid Closet* notes anticipated "the fate of screen gays for years to come."

Different from the Others could hardly have been more direct in its plea for the abolishment of the 1871 law against homosexuality that had in fact led to uncountable instances of blackmail and suicide. Many authorities uncomfortable with homosexuality nonetheless agreed these latter scourges were gross injustices and that the film built an eloquent case against them.

Yet within fifteen months of its Berlin premiere, the feature was officially banned from public exhibition by the German government. Largely in response to *Different*, censorship laws whose abandonment had enabled its production in the first place were re-introduced in 1920. There had also been reports of scattered rioting and vandalism in theaters showing the film.

The year of its release also saw the founding of the nationalistic German Workers' Party, whose followers eventually became better known as the Nazis. Their explicitly anti-Semitic message found a perfect target in Hirschfeld who was already much derided by right-wing moralists. While the doctor was a thoroughly modern secularist little attuned to the religious or cultural aspects of his family's Jewish background, that ancestry was nonetheless a focal point for many detractors. The film was called "a feast for degenerates which could ruin German youth," its chief sponsor an "Apostle of Sodomy" who was seldom described without comparisons to "swine." As National Socialism gradually crushed the Weimar Republic, images of a Hirschfeld, hirsute and bulky, were used in Nazi propaganda to illustrate "the most repulsive of all Jewish monsters."

the first movie to portray homosexual characters beyond the usual innuendo and ridicule

For a time, however, his institute continued its advocacy work, despite the political tides rising against it. The favorable attention it drew from many quarters encompassed celebrity guests and visitors, including Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein as well as authors Walter Benjamin, Christopher Isherwood, André Gide, and W.H. Auden. Foreign scientists, physicians, and diplomats also paid tribute, many professing amazement that *Different from the Others* (which they were allowed to view at the Institute) had been so savagely treated. In 1927, Hirschfeld and Oswald attempted to overturn the film's ban by creating a new version called *The Laws of Love*, from which the original's already exceedingly mild expressions of physical love between men (as when Paul walks arm-in-arm with his protégé) were expunged. Even that watered-down repackaging couldn't change German authorities' minds.

As the 1930s dawned, Magnus Hirschfeld embarked on an extensive global lecture tour, despite poor health. The Nazis had only just seized power in early 1933 when the Institute was ransacked by marauding Hitler Youth. Much of what they didn't immediately destroy was burnt several days later in a public bonfire; what remained from the priceless archives of sexual research and errata was largely auctioned off. While despondent at these losses, not to mention travel that had turned into permanent exile, Hirschfield mused, "If Germany doesn't want me, I don't want it either."

Hirschfeld died in 1935 at age sixty-seven in Nice, France, no doubt fortunate to have avoided the deportation, imprisonment, and execution that greeted many of his compatriots. While once he'd come close to getting Paragraph 175 repealed, under the Nazis the law was actually expanded leading to the arrests of some 100,000 gay men, many of whom died in concentration camps. (San Franciscans Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman's 2000 documentary *Paragraph 175* uses survivor testimonies to limn that long-overlooked historical chapter in detail.)

Berlin colleagues Hirschfeld had hoped could carry on and preserve his work were unable to do so. His principal assistant and life companion Karl Giese (who plays Paul's younger self in *Different*) was driven to suicide during the war, and immediate postwar politics and academia had little place for Hirschfeld's ideas about the Third Sex. Some of the latter now appear antiquated or simply wrongheaded. Yet others—including the now-rebounding notion that sexual preference is more biologically than psychologically rooted—proved remarkably prescient. Nonetheless, even the Sexual Revolution-launching bombshell of the Kinsey Reports did little to revive his stature, in part because so few of his voluminous writings had been translated from the German.

It wasn't until well into the post-Stonewall era that the tide began to turn. A sole surviving partial print of Hirschfeld's *Different from the Others* at Gosfilmofond in Moscow allowed its rediscovery as a forgotten milestone in LGBTQ culture. Likewise, Hirschfeld was resuscitated as a pioneering figure by emerging specialists in the new fields of gay history and gender studies. In 1999, radical German gay filmmaker Rosa von Praunheim released a biographical drama called *The Einstein of Sex*, its name drawn from promotional hyperbole used during Hirschfeld's 1930–31 American lecture tour. Numerous organizations have sprung up in his honor, most recently the Magnus Hirschfield National Foundation, which was endowed by the German Federal Ministry of Justice to preserve his legacy, foster education, and promote tolerance towards sexual minorities.

One wonders what he'd think of today's still sharply divided discourse about homosexuality—or the fact that despite the past half-century's very liberal social climate in Germany, Paragraph 175 wasn't voided outright until 1994. For better and worse, the words Hirschfeld speaks (via intertitle) in *Different from the Others* remain relevant almost a hundred years later:

> [Homosexuality is] neither a vice nor a crime, indeed, not even an illness, but instead a variation, one of the borderline cases that occur frequently in nature. Your son suffers not from his condition, but rather from the false judgment of it. This is the legal and social condemnation of his feelings, along with widespread misconceptions about their expression …. The persecution of homosexuals belongs in the same sad chapter of human history in which persecution of heretics and witches is inscribed … [such laws] are a violation of the fundamental rights of the individual.

—Dennis Harvey

FLASHES OF THE PAST:

Pathé News' Fifteenth Anniversary Reel (1910–1925)

Pioneer of the actuality and newsreel format, Pathé produced a regular program of news footage shot by Pathé's cameramen around the world and released weekly in American theaters beginning in 1911. According to Raymond Fielding's *The American Newsreel,* at its height, such newsreels were seen by more than 200 million viewers a week and thrived as a staple of the moviegoing experience until the arrival of television news after World War II.

1910

Former President Theodore Roosevelt on safari, which begins in British East Africa (now Kenya) and ends in Khartoum. He then travels to Norway to collect the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to him in 1906 for brokering an end to the Russo-Japanese War.

1911

King George V and Queen Mary, recently crowned in England, are installed as Emperor and Empress of India in the Delhi Durbar, or "Court of Delhi." They were the only British sovereigns to ever attend such a coronation ceremony.

1912

Labor unrest in the mines of South Africa roughly began in 1911 and actually came to a head in July 1913 when organized white miners gathered in Johannesburg's Market Square outside the exclusive Rand Club and were met by mounted police patrols armed with pickaxes and guns. African workers had also attempted to strike and were forced at the tip of bayonets back into the mine shafts.

1913

George V of Britain visits Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany. The two monarchs were first cousins to each other (as well as to Tsar Nicholas II of Russia).

Suffragettes marching in London. Footage of an arrest and Emmeline Pankhurst carrying bouquet of white flowers. (British women over thirty were finally enfranchised in 1918.)

The Russian tsar, his wife, and their five children four years before their execution in the Ural mountains

1914

Edward VII, Prince of Wales, at age twenty, presiding over his first public ceremony. He is named the Duke of Windsor only after abdicating the throne in 1936.

Emperor Franz Josef of Austria-Hungary, two years before the assassination of his nephew, the presumptive heir, set off events that lead to World War I.

Kaiser Wilhelm's order calling for German troops to be "placed on a war footing"

French troops muster in Paris; thousands in Belgium, invaded by the Kaiser's army in August, become refugees.

1915

Russian troops on the eastern front

1916

General John J. Pershing leads U.S. cavalry troops into Mexico in pursuit of General Pancho Villa, who continued to elude the expedition, which lasted almost a year and nearly brought the U.S. and Mexico to war.

The Tsar's fleet engages the Ottoman Navy in the Bosporus. The two empires had been at war since a surprise attack on the Russian Black Sea coast the year before.

1917

The Bolshevik Revolution. The U.S. did not officially recognize the Soviet government until 1933.

U.S. President Woodrow Wilson signs war declaration and Secretary of War Newton D. Baker draws first lots for nationwide draft.

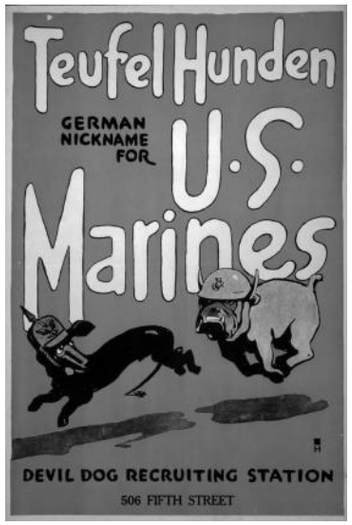
General Pershing arrives in France and American soldiers fight in the battle of Château-Thierry.

German soldiers surrender in the trenches.

Display of new, fiercer weaponry that changed the nature of warfare

1918

In November, the Armistice is signed in France, putting an end to fighting between the Allies and Germany.



1919

27th Infantry Division Homecoming Parade in New York City. (Its insignia is in the shape of the Orion constellation, a play on the name of its WWI commander, John F. O'Ryan.)

Citizens crowd into the streets as Germany becomes a republic.

In May U.S. Navy flyers set off from Rockaway, NY, for the first transatlantic flight, arriving in Lisbon twenty-three days later. (British flyers complete the first nonstop flight across the Atlantic Ocean that June.)

U.S. President Wilson arrives in France for Paris Peace Conference and negotiation of what becomes the Treaty of Versailles.

"Devil Dogs" homecoming parade in New York City led by Major General John A. Lejeune. German soldiers reportedly called the American marines they engaged at Belleau Wood "Dogs from Hell."

1920

Britain sends in the notorious Black and Tans to fight the IRA during the Irish Rebellion, today more accurately known as the Irish War of Independence. The Irish Free State was created by treaty in late 1921.

1921

On Veterans Day, the unidentified remains of an American soldier from a battlefield in France are entombed at Arlington Cemetery.

Third National Convention of the American Legion Convention is held in Kansas City. WWI Allied generals attend the groundbreaking ceremony for the city's Liberty Memorial.

1922

In September, flames rage for more than a week after Turkish forces set fires throughout the Greek and Armenian quarters of Smyrna (now known as Izmir).

Joint Army-Navy bombing tests

1923

The Great Kanto earthquake on September 1 levels Tokyo and leaves 100,000 dead.

On August 2, President Warren G. Harding dies in a San Francisco hotel while on a western states speaking tour. Vice-President Calvin Coolidge becomes 30th President of the United States.

1924

U.S. Air Service flyers become the first to successfully circle the globe, piloting bombers modified for the flight by Donald Douglas.

Tens of thousands turn out in Moscow's freezing temperatures for the funeral procession of Vladimir Ilych Ulyanov, better known as Lenin, who died January 21 at age fifty-three after suffering three debilitating strokes.

1925

After a landslide victory, President Calvin Coolidge is inaugurated on the Capitol steps alongside Vice-President Charles Dawes. Coolidge's term ran through the end of the Roaring Twenties.

Clockwise from top left:Theodore Roosevelt on safari, 1909; Romanovs, 1914; government poster, 1917; Tokyo, Great Kanto Earthquake, 1923; a wounded Free State soldier in Dublin, 1922; the third Delhi Durbar, 1911

Emil Jannings and Evelyn Brent

THE LAST COMMAND

LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY ALLOY ORCHESTRA

Directed by Josef von Sternberg, USA, 1928
Cast Emil Jannings, Evelyn Brent, William Powell, Jack Raymond, Nicholas Soussanin, Michael Visaroff, and Fritz Feld **Production** Paramount Famous Lasky Corporation **Print Source** Paramount Pictures

Russia's frozen inaccessibility, its mink-clad aristocrats, impeccable ballerinas, and candy-colored turrets further piqued American fascination when the Russian Revolution toppled the Romanov dynasty in the second decade of the twentieth century. Hollywood, housing a small community of the former empire's exiles at the time, obliged, spinning stories of the commingling of royal and peasant, the imperial and revolutionary, making cliché out of envisioned tragedies. The number of such movies in the late silent era seems to surge.

1928 was a good year for Russian stories

In 1927, *Resurrection*, directed by Edwin Carewe, has a Russian prince falling for a peasant girl and Benjamin Christensen's *Mockery* features Lon Chaney running the masochistic gamut from peasant to Bolshevik to martyr for love on the Siberian steppe. The next year brought audiences Frank Lloyd's *Adoration*, about Prince Orloff and his wife fleeing to Paris and becoming waiters; *The Red Dance*, directed by Raoul Walsh, with Dolores Del Rio as a peasant girl reluctant to kill a grand duke on Bolshevik orders; Sam Taylor's *Tempest*, written by the cofounder of the Moscow Art Theater and new Los Angeles resident V.I. Nemirovich-Danchenko and starring John Barrymore as a peasant soldier-turned-revolutionary in love with a faithless princess; and a Columbia Pictures stab at the subgenre, *The Scarlet Lady*, in which a young revolutionary, played by German import Lya de Putti, hides from the Cossacks under Prince Nicholas's bed.

At least three films wove in a Hollywood take on itself. From 1927, *High Hat* centers around the antics of a lazy extra on the set of a film about the Russian Revolution. 1928's *Clothes Make the Woman* imagines young Princess Anastasia rescued by a revolutionary and becoming a Hollywood star. And, in the middle of it all, Josef von Sternberg's *The Last Command*, made at the end of 1927 and released in January of 1928, about a White Russian, played by Emil Jannings, who falls from the highest-ranking spot in the Tsar's army all the way down to a Hollywood extra.

Sternberg, whose films court authenticity and fantasy simultaneously, wrote about the presence of Russians on his set in his 1965 memoir, *Fun in a Chinese Laundry*, while getting in a jab about his difficult leading man: "I fortified my image of the Russian Revolution by including in my cast of extra players an assortment of Russian ex-admirals and generals, a dozen Cossacks, and two former members of the Duma, all victims of the Bolsheviks, and, in particular, an expert on borscht by the name of Koblianski. These men, especially one Cossack general who insisted on keeping my car spotless, viewed Jannings's effort to be Russian with such disdain that I had to order them to conceal it, whereas Jannings openly showed his contempt for their effort to be Russian on every occasion." (Scholar Olga Matich parses the truth about which Russians were actually in Hollywood in a 2005 article for *Russian Review*.)

Story credit for *The Last Command* officially goes to Lajos Biró, whose imagination also begat *Forbidden Paradise* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1924), *Hotel Imperial*

(Mauritz Stiller, 1927), *The Way of All Flesh* (Victor Fleming, 1927), and the already noted *Adoration*. As Sternberg tells it, the Hungarian (not to mention scriptwriter John F. Goodrich) merely collected a paycheck. "I wrote the manuscript …," he insisted. "I saw an opportunity to deal with the machinery of Hollywood and its callous treatment of the film extra." Emil Jannings took credit for the story idea in his memoirs, and an eleven-page synopsis (titled *The General*) housed at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences library verifies his assertion.

Scott Eyman tells a more complete genesis story with the kind of detail that helps it ring true. Director Ernst Lubitsch recognized the owner of a Sunset Boulevard eatery (scholar Anton Kaes says it was New York) working as an extra on the set of his 1927 film, *The Student Prince in Old Heidelberg*. The restaurateur, named Theodore Lodi, Lubitsch said, was General Feodor Lodyzhensky of the late, great imperial army. Lubitsch passed on the anecdote to Jannings who had built a body of work Sternberg biographer John Baxter calls a veritable German subgenre, *janningsfilme*, in which "an aging man is humiliated and degraded and dies of a broken heart." When later someone sued Paramount over story credit, everyone thought it was Lubitsch. But as Eyman describes, he'd been denied credit before and was not going to accept it now when it came as blame. Paramount settled. (A notice in *Exhibitors Daily Review* identified the claimant as scriptwriter of the unproduced *Down on the Volga River*, Ramon Jordansky.)

But Sternberg once said that story meant nothing to him anyway and regardless of who wrote what he made it his own, beginning the film in Hollywood with the already broken-down general remembering his past. With sets by former Ufa art director Hans Dreier (who worked on eleven other Sternberg films) and the director's signature use of props to bestow meaning (watch for furs and cigarettes), *The Last Command* is bathed in pools of evocative light and swathed in shadows that reveal both mood and character. The spaces between the camera and the action are also characteristically rich in captivating detail, rows of soldiers, bayonets, arriving trains. Sternberg's tour de force comes early in the film. Called to report to the studio as an extra, Grand Duke Sergius Alexander is caught in the crushing horde of thousands trying to enter the studio gates to retrieve his costume for the day's shoot. In an extended lateral tracking shot, the camera follows Jannings as he's jostled through a succession of service windows to get his uniform, boots, and weapon, an impersonal assembly line that is echoed several times in the film.

Held back from release because of its uncomplimentary take on Hollywood and America's ambiguous relationship with the ten-year-old Bolshevik government, *The Last Command* got into theaters after a green light from Paramount stockholder Otto Kahn, who made a good call. The film reportedly broke the record at New York's first-run Rialto Theater when it opened there in January. At the first Academy Awards, Jannings won for best actor for playing the fallen general (and for his performance in *The Way of All Flesh*), and Lajos Biró garnered an honorable mention in the category of original story. (Ben Hecht took home the top prize for the first in Sternberg's silent-era trifecta, *Underworld*.)

1928 continued to be a good year for Russian stories. Lubitsch's *The Patriot* featured Jannings as a mad eighteenth-century tsar, and MGM cast its two biggest stars as Russians: Greta Garbo as a spy in love with an Austrian captain in Fred Niblo's *The Mysterious Lady* and John Gilbert acting out a by-then familiar drama opposite Renée Adorée in George Hill's *The Cossacks*, very loosely based on the Tolstoy story. 1928 was also good to Sternberg who went on to direct the film that many critics consider to be his silent masterpiece, *The Docks of New York*, which revisited a waterfront setting he had used in his first film, *The Salvation Hunters*. He had full director credit on ten films before 1930, *annus dietrich*, the beginning of his six-film collaboration with the German cabaret singer turned actress-icon. In a *New Yorker* profile in March of 1931, the year Americans got to see the English-language version of *Der blaue Engel*, the writer begins where most begin when discussing him as if it's already necessary to recuperate his silent film career: "Dietrich is really only an incident in von Sternberg's success." A few years later the director took on a different chapter of Russian imperial history, casting his muse as Catherine the Great in *The Scarlet Empress*.

—Shari Kizirian

***Adapted from an article that first appeared in* Senses of Cinema.**

William Powell as Lev Andreyev

THE GENERAL (VICTORY)

Script synopsis by Emil Jannings

The picture starts in Winter 1917, shortly before the debacle of the Russian army and the outbreak of the Russian revolution. The opening scenes are laid in Petersburg, and it is absolutely necessary to show the splendor and the luxury of dying Russia, so that the audience gets a good idea of the power of our hero and of the wealth and luxury of the aristocratic atmosphere.

The section is centered around Prince Sergius, a cousin of the czar, 45 years old - a distinctive type of the Russian grandseigneur, a tall and gentle man of a sparkling temperament, full of charm and brutality. In him an entire section of human beings is personified and the whip rulership of former Russia.

I do not know with which scene one has to start the picture, but I imagine to show picturesque Petersburg deep in snow with slides (troykas). Just a glimpse of it, so that the audience gets the romantic picture of this atmosphere. Prince Sergius has just returned on leave to Petersburg from the front; the famous first dancer of the opera, Natascha, is his sweetheart.

...

The "heavy" is not in it at all, I mean the heavy for the prince; and so I believe it is advisable to show this figure in the introduction in order to point out the sharp contrasts between those two men, who meet each other again in Hollywood under conditions entirely changed.

...

What is going to follow now are no mere suggestions for the story itself. Here comes for the first time the poet Jannings, for the following scenes are highly dramatic, even as a synopsis only.

We saw sufficiently Russian revolution films; we saw them all. In spite of the high box-office returns "The Volga Boatman" was the silliest of all. Thus little Willy sees the Russian revolution, and though the big public only consists of little Willies I want to try to give something equivalent and artistic. In "Potemkin" the revolution was laid on a cruiser in midsea. It is no use telling a word about this picture, for it is wonderful and great. I see the revolution scenes in a moving train, raving through deep snow. It is the same train de luxe which brought the prince to the front, full of generals, officers and soldiers. All lost self-control and flee the train. The first car is the de luxe car of prince Sergius, who sits at a window in deep thought, wrapped up in his fur-coat. His face is pale, he does not move. Next to him Natascha and his adjutant (Maybe the adjutant can be the heavy). The sight of this down-hearted general may be played highly dramatical. Meanwhile one sees how the bolshevism makes progress. One sees the burning station-building, and the officers are killed by soldiers, etc. Several gallows have been put up with officers dangling down; others are degraded, and one sees the melting-pot of all the tribes of Russia massacring the officers. All drink vodka heavily, and the audience must have the impression that hell is loose. Not like in "The Volga Boatman", where the revolutionists are gentle souls and faint in front of real men.

...

Sergius jumps out of the car right into them. Natascha at his side, and all who shouted like a flock of mad dogs become silent suddenly in front of the monumental greatness and composure of this man, who looks at them without fear. Nobody dares to touch him; he sees the murdered officers dangling at the gallows; he watches the Russian flag with the double eagle torn up and the red Internationale hissed. … In this very moment his "faithful servant", the khirgiz, jumps on him from behind and tears his fur coat off his shoulders. Sergius turns briskly and both men face each other. Two different worlds are face to face here: the khirgiz laughs roaring right into his face and says: "Yes, you son of a … you have worn furs long enough, now it is our turn." And he throws the fur around his shoulders. These words mark the general attack at Sergius and Natascha. He shields Natascha with his own body from the senseless and rude attacks of the mob, who are intoxicated and have nothing human any more. The emblems of the general are torn from Sergius' shoulders. "String him up" calls somebody. Some young Cossacks take Natascha apart and others make preparations for Sergius' execution. In the last moment when they try to put the noose around his neck one of the soldiers says: "Stop, keep him alive until we are in Petersburg." The prince is dragged to the locomotive, the uniform is torn from him and there he stands in the biting cold, only clad with undershirt and pants.

...

I see a special climax in this scene, the different effect; first Natascha dancing at the opera, celebrated like Pavlova, then for those beastly soldiers. The effect is sure and highly dramatical. On the locomotive one sees the prince collapsing with his face resting in the coal. The soldiers on the roofs of the cars watch this smilingly and shout with joy. The khirgiz puts him on his feet and he starts throwing coal into the machine again.

...

The train filled with drunken soldiers pulls into another station and stops. A scene has to be found where the prince succeeds in escaping on account of the general drunkenness. While attempting to run away, he throws a Cossack from the locomotive, jumps on him, tears his sheep-fur from him and thus makes an escape in this disguise. It is imperative to have another scene between Natascha and the prince, which must be highly dramatical. One sees how Natascha gives him her diamonds and persuades him to escape. The situation must be so clear, that in the first place Natascha is going to escape with him, but in the last moment they are prevented from doing so and the lovers must be torn apart similar to the scene in "The Big Parade" by Natascha proceeding to Petersburg in the de luxe train, while the prince jumps into a freight car of a freight train just leaving in [the] opposite direction.

SADIE THOMPSON

LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY DONALD SOSIN

Directed by Raoul Walsh, 1928, USA
Cast Gloria Swanson, Lionel Barrymore, Raoul Walsh, James A. Marcus, Sophia Artega, Charles Lane, Florence Midgley, Blanche Friderici, and Will Stanton **Production** Gloria Swanson Productions **Print Source** Kino Lorber

"THAT GIRL IS FROM THE DISREPUTABLE DISTRICT OF SAN FRANCISCO." –Lionel Barrymore as Mr. Davidson

Sadie Thompson had the great Raoul Walsh as director and costar, but studying the history of the film leaves little doubt that Gloria Swanson has a strong claim as its auteur. She jumped through hoops to acquire the property, fought the censors to get it produced, cowrote the script with Walsh, chose the cast largely herself, sold one of her houses to keep it going, helped finish the editing when Walsh had to leave for another project, and, above all, gave a sensational performance in the title role. There is symmetry in Swanson's dominance of the *Sadie Thompson* saga, for the movie is the evergreen story of a woman who must fight her way through a world that's been rigged from top to bottom by men.

Swanson's Sadie washes up on Pago Pago in the South Pacific, on the lam from the police in San Francisco. Her raucous sex appeal bewitches the local Marines, and she falls for one, Sergeant Tim O'Hara (Raoul Walsh), whom she calls "Handsome." (Swanson called Walsh "Handsome" for the rest of their lives.) But Sadie is nearly brought to ruin by the self-styled reformer Davidson (a chillingly sadistic Lionel Barrymore). Davidson is the ultimate mansplainer, a bully whose moralizing covers up a degenerate nature. He threatens to send Sadie back to the States to face a murder rap. Desperate and vulnerable, at first Sadie converts to Davidson's pitiless form of religion, even rejecting Handsome's marriage proposal—until Davidson's true nature reveals itself.

In 1928, Gloria Swanson was married to Henri de la Falaise, Marquis de la Coudraye. She lived in a lavish mansion in Beverly Hills and had a wardrobe and jewels that were the envy of every fan-magazine reader from Bangor to San Diego. But when Swanson sashays down the gangplank to meet a slavering crowd of men at the beginning of *Sadie Thompson*, it's one of the biggest "Hi, Sailor" moments in movies. Four-foot eleven in her stocking feet, Swanson teeters on her high heels. She's wearing a too-tight jacket trimmed with an incongruous white fur collar, a matching skirt, a picture hat with a foot-long feather, and over her shoulder she's slung a parasol that she hasn't bothered to unfurl, yet. When we get a load of the rear view, we see the jacket's piping forms two arrows pointing straight down to the main attraction. Her walk starts at the ankles and shimmies right up to her shoulders. And those big, glorious, paper-white Swanson teeth flash again and again like the sign over an all-night bar.

She's bubbling over with life, bringing the party with her wherever she goes. When Sadie's light is almost snuffed out by Davidson, a "psalm-singing son-of-a-bitch" (as Swanson snarls at him in a memorable gift to lip-readers), the audience yearns for revenge.

It was Walsh who suggested they take on the play *Rain*, based on the short story "Miss Thompson," by Somerset Maugham. Jeanne Eagels, probably the most worshipped Broadway star of her era, had played Sadie Thompson in the triumphant New York run of *Rain*, and later a tour. But the play was so scandalous that when Walsh and Swanson began

Gloria Swanson as Sadie Thompson

work on their adaptation, the censors at the Hays Office wouldn't even permit them to use the title.

But "what Gloria wanted, Gloria got," as Walsh put it in his autobiography, and she made a plan. Swanson met with Will Hays himself and talked to him about "Miss Thompson" and the greatness of Maugham, without mentioning the play. Hays, possibly not connecting the dots with the notorious *Rain*, agreed that it sounded like a fine property, provided they changed the Reverend Davidson to a layman. Thus encouraged, Swanson bought the movie rights to the original short story, and, in a complex series of maneuvers that take up a good many pages of her own autobiography, she bought the play rights, too, anonymously through a broker. She then had to weather the wrath of multiple studio chiefs who were both concerned about censors' retribution and peeved that she'd found a way to film a massive hit previously deemed off-limits.

The censors relented but monitored the film closely and scissored several scenes. Despite the tropical downpours that drench the picture, Swanson later recalled that nearly every time the word "rain" appeared in an intertitle, out it had to go. (Perhaps keeping such a close watch for any reminder of the play title was why the censors failed to lip-read the four or five times Swanson clearly repeats "son-of-a-bitch.")

Troubles multiplied. With Pago Pago an impractical location shoot, they settled for Catalina Island, where master production designer William Cameron Menzies created a striking series of sets. Midway through, Samuel Goldwyn used the fine print in a contract to call back cinematographer George Barnes; Robert Kurrle was tried, but his interiors were deemed inferior. In the end, Swanson used the versatile MGM cinematographer Oliver Marsh, "and he saved the film for me," said Swanson in her autobiography.

The film was being produced under United Artists, where Swanson had her own production unit. Studio head Joe Schenck called Swanson on the carpet for being behind schedule and over budget, and, as Swanson recalled in her book, got an earful of his old friend's frustration: "When Irving Thalberg reshoots a third of a picture, you call him a genius. When Sam Goldwyn does it, he's maintaining his reputation for quality. But when I do it, you treat me like a silly female who can't balance her checkbook after a shopping spree." Rather than have Schenck pick up the costs and wind up beholden to him, Swanson sold her house in Croton-on-Hudson.

In the end, the film was a triumph. Walsh had resisted playing Handsome, but he has delicious chemistry with Swanson. He admitted to having a crush on her at the time, and she was attracted to him as well, although they both swore no affair ensued. Barrymore gives a surprisingly subdued performance, focused mostly on his burning stares and alpha-male body language. ("Am I eating up the scenery?" asked Barrymore, according to Walsh. "Menzies can build more," was the director's riposte.)

one of the biggest "Hi, Sailor" moments in movies

Walsh was one of the finest action directors who ever lived. *Sadie Thompson* offers a chance to see what he does with a dialogue-intensive play. Walsh finds his action in his performers: in Sadie fighting the mosquito-netting in her room as she tries to go to sleep; as Handsome stands in the rain to talk to Sadie who's dangling through her window; as Davidson watches Sadie and the drum of his fingers on the table echo the rain outside; even in the occasional bits of slapstick such as when English actor Will Stanton drunk-walks his way home.

As with many silent movies, the story of *Sadie Thompson* has a coda. The last print was discovered in Mary Pickford's collection, and nitrate decomposition had already claimed its last reel. In the late 1980s Kino International reconstructed the final scenes using a montage of stills, and damage is visible in other scenes as well. Still, *Sadie*, like its heroine, has endured, proving what Swanson told Walsh when he doubted she could pull off the part: "How do you know I wouldn't make the best chippie who ever swung a hip?"

—Farran Smith Nehme

Raoul Walsh and Gloria Swanson

A Director Who Defies the Censors

By William H. McKegg

"You are causing a lot of trouble here."

The man followed Sadie Thompson across the room and stood facing her like a prophet of doom. A rocking chair was between them. Miss Thompson calmly removed the chewing gum from her mouth and stuck it under a near-by table. Derisively, she leaned on the back of the chair and rocked slowly to and fro, flinging brazen defiance at her accuser, who shook with suppressed rage.

"You are a bad woman!" he blurted. Sadie Thompson flared up like a torch. She now rocked the chair violently—sneering, brazen, defiant. Her would-be reformer suddenly snatched the chair from her hold. He looked ready to tear her to pieces. Sadie smiled knowingly. She sauntered away toward the door.

"Well," she asked tauntingly, "and what are you going to do about it?"

The religious reformer stumbled after her to the door and watched her go down the rain-beaten pathway outside the hotel.

The scene—part of Gloria Swanson's "Sadie Thompson"—was brief. Raoul Walsh, the director, had it retaken two or three times, until the mental conflict between the two players vibrated powerfully, bitterly.

"This is the type of picture I like to do best, he told me, speaking of "Sadie Thompson." Direct and honest, he knows his path and is not afraid to walk it. "Keep your audience pepped up all the time, feeling the conflict between your characters," he stressed.

"I don't care for too much plot in a story. If there are two or three strong characterizations in it, they alone should supply all the action that is necessary. I doubt whether any audience cares for a picture with too much plot. It's too confusing. A simple story, forceful and vivid, is more attractive."

Walsh personally strikes one as a rough-and-ready worker, with a good sense of humor. He is not the suave, sophisticated type of director. Nor does he pretend to be. On the set, you see him sometimes wearing a rough blue wool jersey with a pair of white trousers. He seems less a director than a stage hand. Yet if a stranger were brought on the set, he would undoubtedly pick Walsh out as the director.

"Yes," he told me, "I started on the legitimate stage, but did nothing to speak of. Oh, I played all kinds of parts—mostly small ones."

He began at the old Biograph studio under D.W. Griffith. He played anything from comedy roles to heroes or heavies. He played the part of John Wilkes Booth in "The Birth of a Nation." Later he branched out into the technical end of the business, becoming for a time Griffith's assistant.

Walsh directed "The Honor System" for Fox ten years ago, starring George Walsh, his brother, and Miriam Cooper. It afforded Walsh his first directorial success.

For several years, however, his name was one of the many that meant little or nothing to the public. Not until the showing of his "The Thief of Bagdad," did the people see his name in the foreground again.

On the strength of that picture, Paramount decided that massive spectacles were what Raoul Walsh could do best. So he was given "The Wanderer" to direct. But the tremendous sets swallowed up the simple story. Then, later, his "The Lady of the Harem" turned out to be a sickly ghost of Flecker's gorgeous poetic romance "The Golden Journey to Samarkand."

With the expiration of his contract with Paramount, Walsh went to William Fox. When "What Price Glory" was to be made many were the grave doubts as to the wisdom of filming such a frank story. But under Raoul Walsh's direction, it became one of the greatest successes of the year. It was just the type of story that he needed, the type in which he could inject honest reality.

Then, "Loves of Carmen" came along. Though it seemed rather ridiculous to essay another Carmen after Pola Negri's dynamic portrayal, Fox saw fit to present Dolores Del Rio and Victor McLaglen as the wild gypsy girl and the dashing toreador.

But Walsh does not handle love, in any of its grades, so well as he handles tense conflict. "What Price Glory" had the rancorous conflict and hate between the two soldiers as its central theme. "Sadie Thompson" has the bitter mental conflict between Sadie and the fanatical reformer and ought to be as great in appeal and popularity as "What Price Glory."

Walsh is not one to hesitate about screening a story few others would care to tackle. "I think," he said, "that when a director makes a hit with one picture of risqué plot, and puts it over in an honest, sincere way, the public expects that kind from him. Von Stroheim, for example, can present pictures to the public that they would not take from other directors."

Walsh not only directed "Sadie Thompson," but also played the part of the young marine who falls in love with the girl. "It was by accident," he explained, "that I jumped in to play the role. It is only a small one, and not so very important. We had tried out several actors for the part, and when we at last did select a man for the role, he came to the studio the next morning with a black eye."

As the young marine, Walsh gives a good performance. He is not one of your soft lovers. When he approaches Sadie, you cannot tell whether he will chuck her under the chin or under the table.

The adaptation of this famous story to the screen caused much controversy. Many people said that it would be impossible to film, and that it would have to be ruined to suit the censors. But people said that when Walsh started on "What Price Glory." And behold the result.

"Make your characters true to life and keep your story as direct and simple as possible," is his rule. "Many screen writers believe that a play or a book, if simple in plot, should be elaborated for the screen. That is not necessary."

So long as Raoul Walsh retains his honesty, his sincerity and his good sense of humor, his work will be well worth watching. "Sadie Thompson" should mark another triumph for him.

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